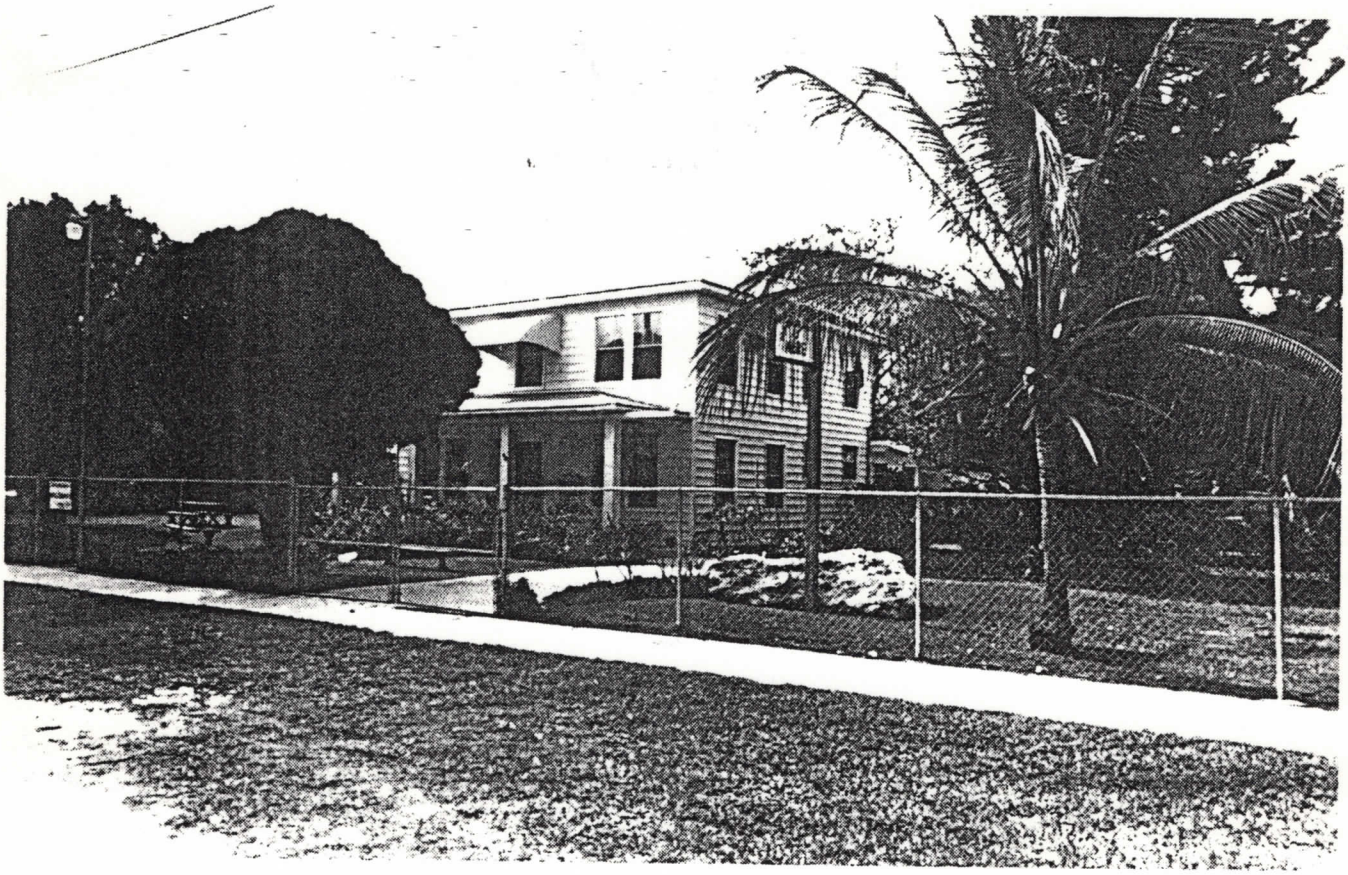
METRO-DADE

METROPOLITAN DADE COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

DESIGNATION REPORT



Grandma Newton / Robertson House
40 N W 5th Ave.
Florida City

METROPOLITAN DADE COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

DESIGNATION REPORT—INDIVIDUAL SITE

Designation No. 8818
Date of Filing
Date of Designation

Owner(s)
Mildred T. Newton

Mailing Address
Grandma Newton's Bed and Breakfast
P.O. Box 1714
Homestead, Florida

SURVEY FINDINGS:

____ H.A.B.S ____ Natl. Reg. ____ H.A.E.R. ____ Other:
__x__ Dade County Historic Survey Findings:
RATING: __2__ Architecture __3__ History __2__ Context

SITE LOCATION:
Town of Florida City
Lots 1-35-36
Block 22

Current Zoning (describe):

Commercial-Neighborhood

Current Use (describe):

Commercial

Current Condition:

☒ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated ☐ Unexposed

☐ Unaltered ☐ Altered

☒ Original Site ☐ Moved _____

Physical Description of Site (see attached photos):

This is a typical example of the wood frame vernacular houses built throughout South Florida around the turn of the century. It is a balloon frame structure, two stories tall, built on a rectangular plan. Exterior walls are faced in horizontal weatherboards. The medium-to-low pitch hipped roof is covered in V-crimped aluminum and has small overhangs.

There is a one story porch across the front. The porch has a hipped roof of low pitch, supported on four square wooden posts. The doorway is centrally located on the front facade. The main door is modern, preceded by a screen door.

Fenestration is arranged as follows: Double sets of sash windows flank the door on the ground floor on the front facade. The same composition of windows flanks a single central window on the second story. On the side elevations four bays of single windows are symmetrically arranged on both stories. All windows are wood sash type, recently installed with plain wood surrounds. Original windows were wood sash also, but in an arrangement of one over one lights.

There is a one story, flat roofed addition attached to the rear of the structure. The grounds are immaculately kept, as is the interior of the house. The property is surrounded by a chain link fence. The exterior of the house has undergone relatively few alterations over the years.

(Use additional sheets if necessary) SEE CONTINUATION SHEET ☐

SIGNIFICANCE

- ☐ Archeology-Prehistoric
- ☐ Archeology-Historic
- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Art
- ☐ Commerce
- ☐ Communications
- ☐ Community Planning
- ☐ Conservation
- ☐ Economics
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Engineering
- ☐ Exploration/Settlement
- ☐ Historical Events
- ☐ Industry
- ☐ Invention
- ☐ Landscape Architecture
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Literature
- ☐ Military
- ☐ Music
- ☐ People
- ☐ Philosophy
- ☐ Politics/Government
- ☐ Religion
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Sculpture
- ☐ Social/Humanitarian
- ☐ Theater
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Other (special)

Significance — Brief summary including documentary evidence that indicates the historical, architectural or archeological significance of the site.

The Grandma Newton/Robertson House, built in 1914, is a fine example of early pioneer architecture in Dade County. The structure is located in Florida City's first subdivision, the Miami Land and Development Subdivision (platted in 1911). In addition, this structure housed three of Florida City's pioneer families, the Simmons, the Rustads, and the Robertsons. Originally the house was designed as a multi-family structure. This design allowed the Robertsons and Grandma Newton to share their home with boarders.[1]

Prior to the completion of the Florida East Coast Railway line, the Tatum Brothers bought 22,000 acres of swamp land in South Dade County. They formed the Miami Land and Development Company and hired Edward Stiling to sell ten acre glade farm lots with one town lot for fifty dollars an acre. Mr. Stiling returned to his home town of Detroit, Michigan where he sold lots to thirty families. The new settlement was named "Detroit." However in 1914, the year the town incorporated, citizens voted to change the name to "Florida City."[2]

In 1914 the families of John and Fred Simmons bought lots one and thirty-six in the new Miami Land and Development Company Subdivision. On their property the two families built the two-story wood frame structure now known as Grandma Newton's Bed and Breakfast. Pioneer life proved too difficult for the Simmons families. In 1917 they sold their property to Joseph Rustad and returned to West Virginia. Rustad, who owned a bakery and lunch counter in town, paid one thousand

[1] Interview with Richard Newton, Florida City, Florida, December 29, 1989; Metropolitan Dade County, Office of Community and Economic Development, From Wilderness to Metropolis (Miami: Metropolitan Dade County, 1982), p. 48.

[2] Ibid., p. 48; Jean Taylor, Villages of South Dade (St. Petersburg: Byron Kennedy and Company, 1987), p. 203, 205.

(Use additional sheets if necessary) SEE CONTINUATION SHEET ☐

dollars for the property. In 1920 the property again changed hands. Mr. Rustad sold the lots and "all household and kitchen furniture contained in the building" to W.F.A. Robertson. Rustad also threw a Model T. Ford into the deal.[3]

W. Frederick A. Robertson left Canada to seek relief from a severe case of hay fever. He arrived in Detroit, Florida in August of 1912. The Tatum Brothers hired Robertson to maintain the motor boats they used to show prospective buyers the glade farm lots. Once settled, Fred sent for his wife Elizabeth and five daughters. The children loved the freedom and adventure of life in South Florida. Elizabeth, on the other hand, was used to city conveniences and viewed life in Florida quite different. "She cried many bitter tears and was not reconciled to it for years, for conveniences were a long time coming".[4]

On his glade farm lot Robertson grew tomatoes. The whole family helped with the hoeing, planting, picking, and canning of the tomatoes. The Robertson Canning Company shipped beans, squash, cabbage, and green tomatoes to wholesale merchants. For their own use and to help pay the "winter bills" they also canned ripe tomatoes, shell beans, and sauerkraut. Financially, 1919-1920 was a good year for the Robertson family and they were able to move to the house on N.W. 5th Avenue (then called Broadway 5).

The house had four bedrooms upstairs, two bedrooms downstairs, a living room and dining room. The rear addition contained two kitchens and across a walkway was a wash house. The prolific number of rooms in the house made it possible to rent to boarders. The Robertson's rented the two downstairs bedrooms and kitchen to winter residents and school teachers. In their new home, they continued the family canning business. The Robertson family resided there until 1951, when Fred bought land and moved to Ft. Pierce. Rooms in this house are still being rented out. The present owner, Mildred Newton, has turned the house into a successful Bed and Breakfast, well known for its delicious meals.[6]

The Grandma Newton/Robertson House is a fine example of early frame vernacular architecture. Evident by early photographs there have been few

[3]Property Deed, Stiling to Simmons, November 3, 1914, Book 138, Page 340; Interview with Margaret Robertson Bartlett Wedemyer, Cutler Ridge, Florida, January 9, 1990; Property Deed, Rustad to Robertson, April 7, 1910, Book 214, Page 445.

[4]Margaret Robertson Bartlett Wedemyer, "Recollections," unpublished, undated.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

exterior alterations to the house. This structure makes an important contribution to the understanding of the settlement patterns and lifestyles in the pioneer community of Florida City.

Bibliographic References:

Dade County, Florida, Records Library Deed Abstracts, Miami, Florida.

Metropolitan Dade County, Office of Community and Economic Development. From Wilderness to Metropolis. Miami: Metropolitan Dade County, 1982.

Newton, Richard. Interview by Teresa Lenox. December 29, 1989.

Taylor, Jean. Villages of South Dade. St. Petersburg: Byron Kennedy and Compnay, 1987.

Wedemyer, Margaret Robertson Bartlett. Interview by Teresa Lenox. Cutler Ridge, Florida, January 9, 1990.

Wedemyer, Margaret Robertson Bartlett. "Recollections," Unpublished. Undated.

Title Verification (attach copy): Book	12820	2330	Warranty Deed
	Page No.	Deed Type	

Impacts — Impact of the designation on proposed public improvements, renewal projects or private development.

Designation would have the effect of bringing any plans for alterations to the property before the Preservation Board for review. Designation will not affect current zoning.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the designation of the Grandma Newton/ Robertson House as an individual historic site.

Special Standards for Certificate of Appropriateness:

Any special standards will follow the general quidelines as recommended for historic structures as detailed in the "Rules and Regulations for Review of Historic Site Designations and Issuance of Certificates of Appropriateness."

Draft Resolution Designating the Property:

WHEREAS, the Grandma Newton/Robertson House, built in 1914, is a structure from the pioneer period of Florida City,

WHEREAS, the Grandma Newton/Robertson House was the residence of three pioneer families,

WHEREAS, the Grandma Newton/Robertson House is a fine example of early frame vernacular architecture in Florida City,

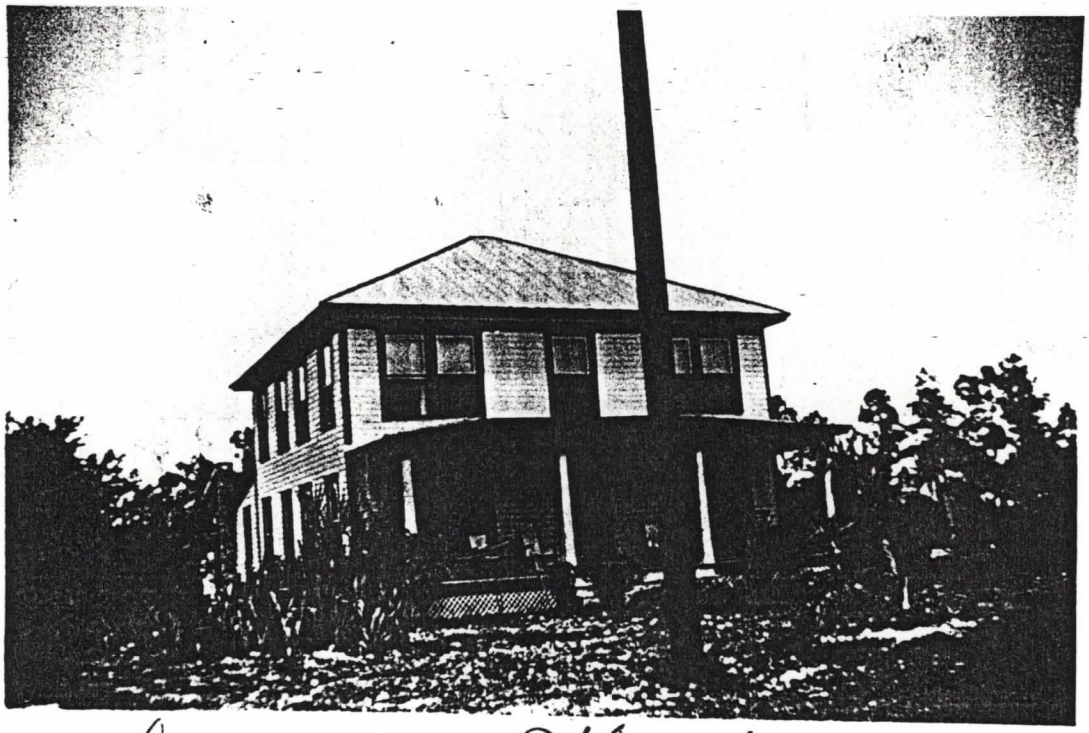
WHEREAS, the Grandma Newton/Robertson House represents the settlement patterns and lifestyle of the pioneer community of Florida City,

WHEREAS, the Grandma Newton/Robertson House is located:

Township 57S, Range 38E, Section 24
Block 22
Lots 1-35-36

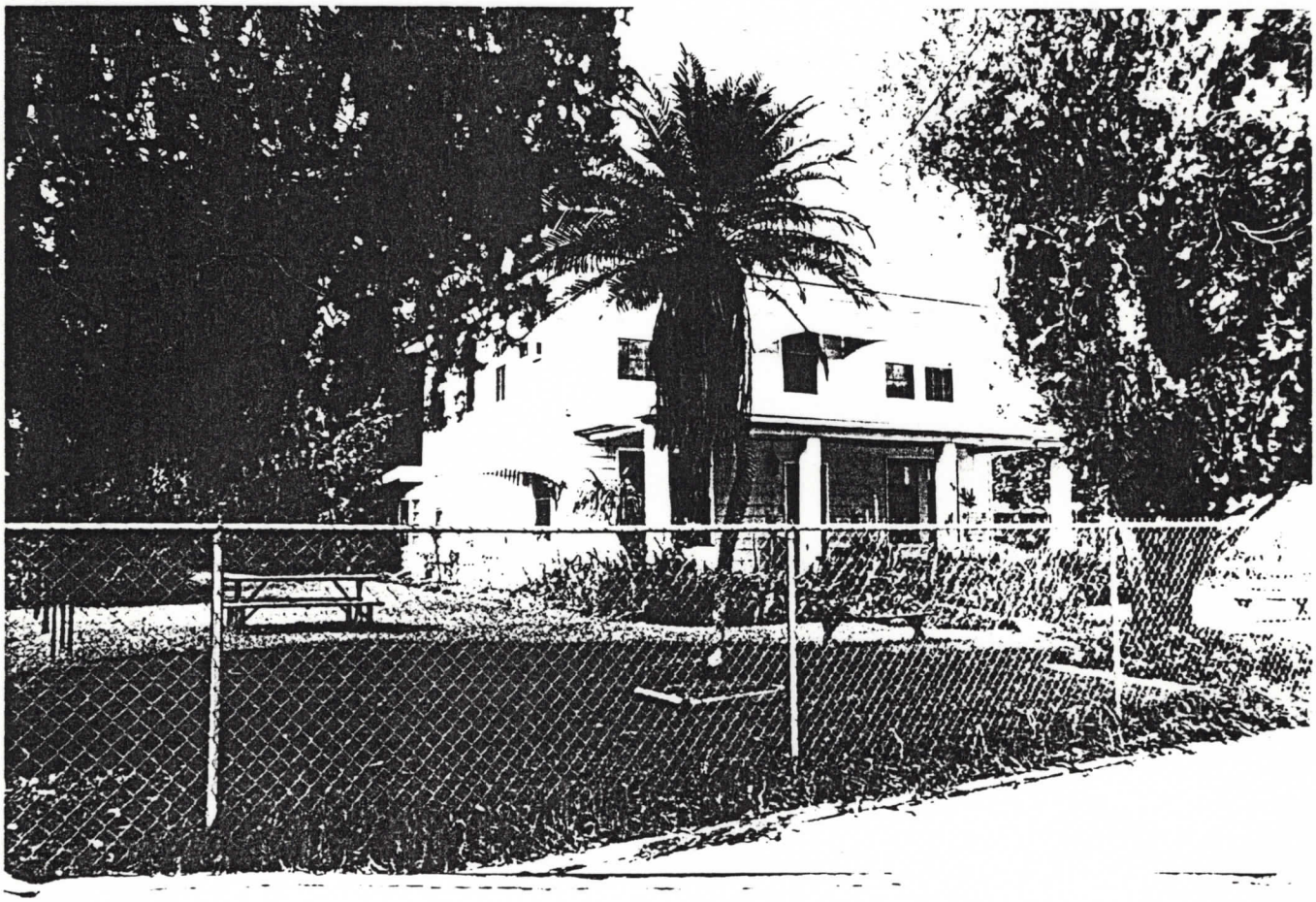
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Historic Preservation Board on Wednesday, February 21, 1990 has designated the Grandma Newton/Robertson House as an individual historic site pursuant to the Metropolitan Dade County Historic Preservation Ordinance (81-13) and that the Grandma Newton/Robertson House is subject to all rights, privileges and requirements, of that ordinance.

Designation is approved as evidenced by the signature of the Historic Preservation Board Chairman.



Old home at Florida City Fla.

Early photograph of Robertson Residence
40 N.W. 5 Avenue



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40 N.W. 5 Avenue

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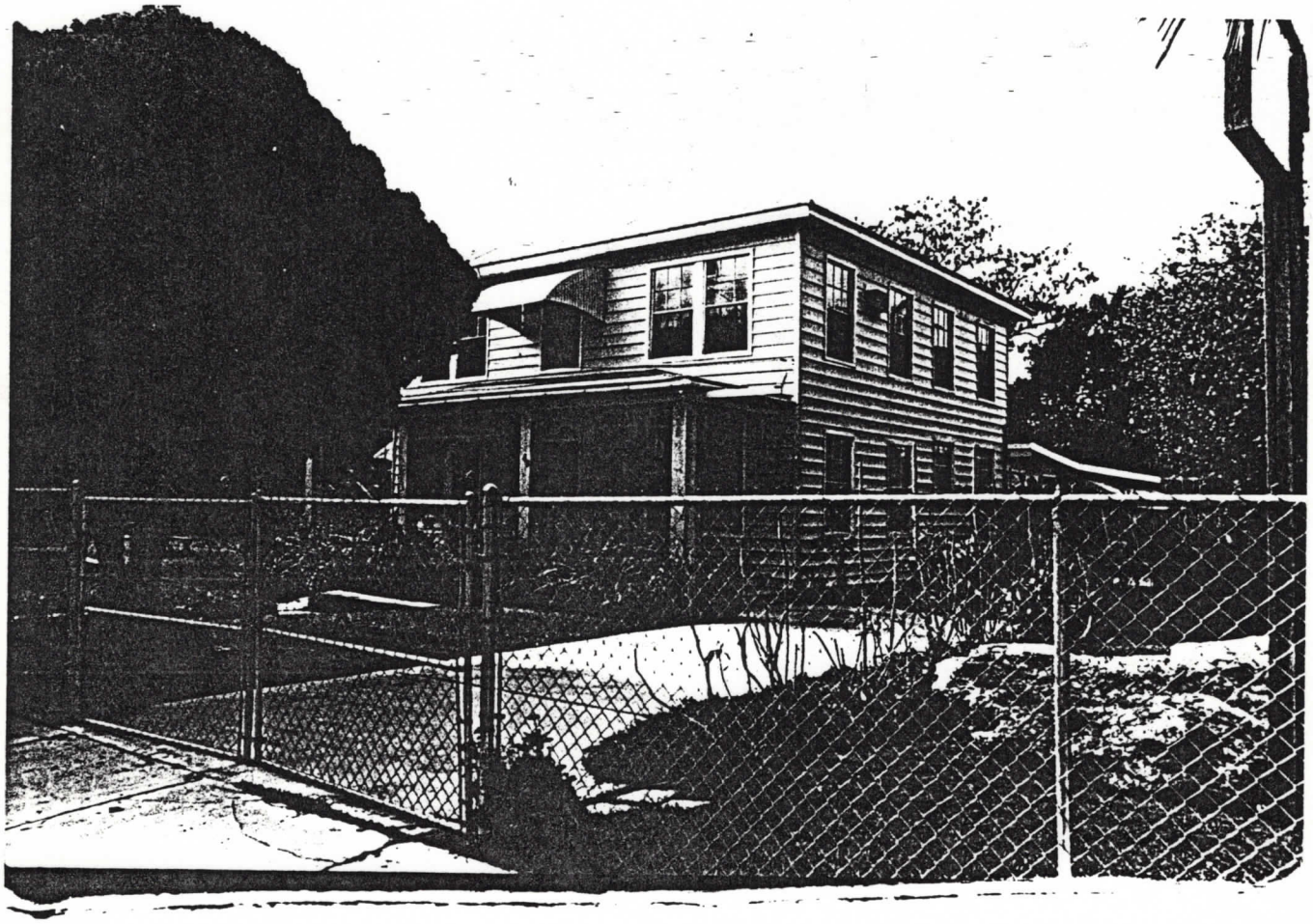

Grandma Newton's Bed and Breakfast
40 N.W. 5 Avenue

290.00

1986 MAR 13 PM 2:17 86R080755

WARRANTY DEED STATUTORY F.S. 689.02

RAMCO FORM 5 (PHOTO

12820 2330

This Indenture,

Made this 12th day of February A.D. 1986 **Between** SANDRA GREENWELL, Joined by her Husband, WALTER GREENWELL

of the County of Jefferson, in the State of Kansas part of the first part, and MILDRED T. NEWTON, a single women,

of the County of Dade, in the State of Florida, whose post office address is P.O. BOX 1714, HOMESTEAD, FLORIDA 33090

part y of the second part.

Witnesseth, That the said part y of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of Ten Dollars and other good and valuable consideration---------Dollars, to them in hand paid by the said part y of the second part, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, ha s granted, bargained, and sold to the said part y of the second part, and his heirs and assigns forever, the following described land, situate, and being in the County of Dade, State of Florida to wit

Lots 1, 35 & 36, in Block 22 of TOWN OF FLORIDA CITY (FORMERLY DETROIT), according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 2, at Page 74 of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida;
a/k/a 40 NW 5th Avenue, Florida City, Florida 33034
a/k/a Lots 1, 35 & 36, in Block 22, of MAP OF DETROIT, FLORIDA, according to the Plat thereof as recorded in Plat Book 2, at Page 74 of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida

290.00 Documentary Stamps Collected
Dade County
Richard P. Brinker
Clerk Circuit County
By [signature] 3/13/86 DC

RECORDED IN OFFICIAL RECORDS BOOK OF DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, RECORD VERIFIED
RICHARD P. BRINKER
CLERK CIRCUIT COURT

And the said part ies of the first part does hereby fully warrant the title to said land, and will defend the same against the lawful claims of all persons whomsoever.

In Witness Whereof, The said part ies of the first part have hereunto set their hands and seal s the day and year first above written.

Signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of:

James L. Swager Jr. — Witness
Sandra Greenwell — SANDRA GREENWELL (L.S.)

Martha Ann Swager — Witness
(L.S.)

STATE OF KANSAS
COUNTY OF Jefferson

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this day, before me, an officer duly authorized in the State aforesaid and in the County aforesaid to take acknowledgments, personally appeared SANDRA GREENWELL to me known to be the person described in and who executed the foregoing instrument and she acknowledged before me that she executed the same.

WITNESS my hand and official seal in the County and State last aforesaid this 12th day of February A.D. 1986.

Theresa Anderson
NOTARY PUBLIC, State of Kansas

My Commission Expires: 12-11-88

THERESA ANDERSON
Jefferson County, Ks.
My Appt. Exp. 12-11-88

This Instrument prepared by: LOUIS M. ROCKMAN, ESQ.
Address 20466 S. Dixie Highway
Miami, Florida, 33189
(305) 232-2161

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12822 2331

Witness

Carole A Stagne
Witness

WALTER GREENWELL

STATE OF FLORIDA)
COUNTY OF DADE)

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this day, before me, an officer duly authorized in the State aforesaid and in the County aforesaid to take acknowledgments, personally appeared WALTER GREENWELL, to me known to be the person described in and who executed the foregoing instruments and he acknowledged before me that he executed the same.

WITNESS my hand and official seal in the County and State last aforesaid this 7th day of March, 1986.

My Commission Expires:

NOTARY PUBLIC, State of Florida at large

Notary Public, State of Florida at Large
My Commission Expires Feb. 24, 1990
Bonded thru Maynard Bonding Agency

RICHARD P. BRINKER
CLERK CIRCUIT COURT

To

Warranty Deed

STATUTORY

RAMCO FORM B (PHOTO)